



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

FY 2006

WILDLIFE SERVICES—MAINE

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Maine

Every day, visitors, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Maine Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Maine is home to a diverse mix of industrial forest lands, scenic coastal areas, and numerous lakes and rivers that attract many urban and suburban residents from other New England States. These visitors often encounter unwanted wildlife at their campsites and summer homes, and frequently request WS' assistance with animals such as bats, beavers, bears, deer, moose, raccoons, and skunks.

Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting commercial timberlands, State and municipal roads, and highways from flood damage caused by beavers
- Protecting a drinking reservoir from fecal contamination caused by migrating gulls
- Using electronic fencing to:
- Protect camps and bee hives from bears
- Protect sheep and other livestock from coyotes
- Protect strawberries, vegetables, and commercial truck crops from deer damage

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Maine:

- Monitoring and reducing gull movements over critical drinking reservoirs
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing blackbird damage to livestock barns and feeding sites
- Controlling wildlife vectors of rabies and chronic wasting disease
- Protecting timber and forest resources

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. The WS program shares information with people about reducing their risk of exposure to wildlife-borne diseases and about minimizing wildlife damage to their property. In addition, WS rents equipment to landowners when deer damage crops, and bears destroy beehives. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. Under the Cooperative Beaver Management Program, Maine WS provides *direct assistance* at more than 1,000 problem sites each year, saving more than \$800,000 annually in road repairs. To support this and other assistance efforts, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Transportation, Timber and Natural Resources

—The Maine Cooperative Beaver Management Program provides an alternative for landowners who want to manage beaver damage that results in flooding to timber, roads, bridges, and property. WS has worked with landowners, towns, State and Federal agencies to develop a cooperative program that provides trained specialists and the appropriate materials to resolve beaver problems. WS provides the expertise and equipment (water leveler devices, traps, vehicles, and tools), and the landowners contribute funding for labor costs. This program has expanded into 12 of Maine's 16 counties since it began in Aroostook County in 1994.

Protecting Air Travel—Deer, Canada geese, gulls, and other wildlife pose a major hazard to aircraft throughout Maine. WS biologists



are trained to assess wildlife hazards, provide technical and operational assistance at military airfields and airports. Biologists also teach airport staff to identify birds of concern and respond to wildlife problems.

Monthly bird surveys at a landfill are conducted to protect aircraft traffic at a neighboring airport. Upon identifying large flocks of birds attracted to the landfill, WS works with landfill operators and the airport manager to reduce the number of birds through harassment and lethal control methods.

Protecting Public Safety—In FY06, WS assisted several paper mills, a naval shipyard, a University agricultural complex, and several dairy farms in identifying available options for resolving building damage caused by roosting pigeons and starlings whose droppings damaged roofing, contaminated livestock feeds, damaged machinery, and building floors. WS provided pigeon and starling removal assistance.

Protecting Human Health—In FY06 WS to assisted two major cities with protecting

their drinking water reservoir from fecal contamination caused by migrating gulls. WS implemented harassment and lethal control techniques and successfully reduced the reservoir's bacterial counts to minimal levels.

Protecting Agricultural Crops—Eighty-six cooperators participated in the Maine Electric Fencing Rental Program during FY06. The program provides commercial producers, hobbyists, and home gardeners with an opportunity to own electric fencing after a five-year lease period. Through the program, producers can effectively protect crops and livestock while spreading out their costs. More than 400 Maine producers have been assisted by this program since 1991.

Wildlife Diseases—Surveillance efforts for avian influenza in Maine were a collaborative effort of WS and Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. In FY06, 572 cloacal swab samples and 660 environmental (fecal) samples were collected from wild birds throughout Maine.

WS conducted surveillance of the wild deer herd for chronic wasting disease (CWD). WS collected and processed 861 samples from hunter-killed white-tailed deer for analysis. All tests submitted in 2006 were negative.

Cervids, or hoofed mammals with antlers, which are held in captivity as alternative livestock, occasionally escape from enclosures and begin roaming the wild. This concerns wildlife managers because exotic, escaped, cervids might hybridize with native deer species and may spread disease between domestic and wild populations. During FY06, Maine WS was called upon to investigate incidents of escaped exotic deer. WS removed one red deer and two fallow deer from the wild. The meat was held until test results revealed that the animals were negative for CWD, Maine Wildlife Services donated 212 pounds of processed meat to soup kitchens.

WS began rabies program work in 2002 in eastern and northern Maine and completed the fourth Maine oral rabies vaccine (ORV)

distribution in 2006 when 50,000 vaccines were distributed in northeastern Maine by aerial delivery and 240 vaccines were distributed by hand. Two post surveillance oral rabies vaccination studies and two raccoon relative density studies were conducted in Washington and Penobscot Counties. During the studies raccoons were temporarily immobilized and biological samples were collected for analysis. The animals were then checked for overall health and released at the capture site after the effects of the medication subsided. Biological samples from those animals are submitted to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

In FY06, WS assisted the Maine Medical Center with a research project to collect and analyze the tick species *Ixodes cookei*, the “woodchuck tick” which is suspected to be the primary carrier of the Powassan virus. The study is intended to determine the prevalence of the virus in three key locations in Maine, where tick submissions have been positive for the Powassan virus. WS provided technical and field assistance to the researcher to help locate and trap animals, in addition to immobilizing and collecting biological specimens from the woodchucks (*Marmota monax*), skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*), and raccoons (*Procyon lotor*). According to Maine Medical Center, four cases of Powassan viral encephalitis were reported in 2000-2001 (one in Vermont and three in Maine), all of which resulted in severe and long-lasting neurological problems. No ticks submitted by WS have tested positive for Powassan virus.

WS assisted Veterinary Services with the collection of 70 blood samples from domestic swine during August 2006. Tests are routinely run on adult domestic swine to permit the transport of offspring in and out of the state of Maine. Swine are screened for diseases including pseudorabies, swine fever, brucellosis, and tuberculosis.

Natural Resources—FY06 was the second in a three-year project in which WS is assisting the Ohio Department of Natural Resources with the reintroduction of snowshoe hares in Ohio. Each year WS live traps up to 200 snowshoe hares, which are flown to Ohio and released.

Looking to the Future

WS will continue to play an important role in rabies surveillance. Maine borders the provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec,

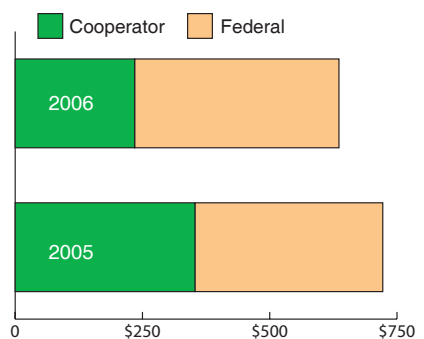
Canada, where extensive concern exists about the spread of rabies from the United States into Canadian provinces. In addition to providing valuable data for Canada, WS' surveillance efforts in Maine are part of a larger effort to determine the distribution and status of rabies in the United States.

WS will further assist the USFWS in their efforts to protect threatened piping plover and least tern populations in Maine. In 2006, WS provided harassment equipment to the USFWS to protect these species from bird and mammal predators. WS is working with USFWS to implement an intense predator control program to further protect these birds so there can be successful breeding populations in Maine.

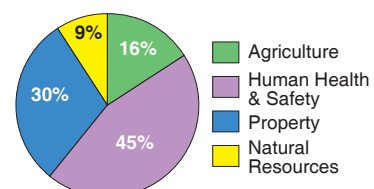
Maine Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

Total Funding (Thousands)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA is an equal employment provider and employer.

Major Cooperators

- Cities of Lewiston and Auburn
- Maine Department of Transportation
- Bath Iron Works
- Sustainable Forest Technologies
- Waste Management Services